Spring 2025

NNC News

The National Numismatic Collection | National Museum of American History

As we approach the Declaration of Independence's 250th anniversary next year, the National Museum of American History is making great strides digitizing the approximately 15,000 United States coins in the National Numismatic Collection. We have photographed about 2,000 pattern, Colonial, private issue and fractional coins to enable the public to access them online. Funding supports the project until June, when we anticipate having more than 4,000 coins digitized. We are deeply grateful to the **Howard F. Bowker Numismatic Projects Endowment Fund**, **Michael Chou** and **Harris Hiter** for supporting this project thus far.

In this newsletter, learn how support from the Friends of the National Numismatic Collection prepares us to tackle these types of large-scale projects, updates to *The Value of Money* in honor of its 10th anniversary, and other important efforts. You help us share our historic and beautiful collection.

Counterclockwise, United States coin patterns: 50 cents, 1891; $10, 1907; 50 cents, 1869; $1, 1836; 1 cent, 1856; $1, 1879; 1 trade dollar, 1873

Collections Care Addresses Top Priorities

Collections care remains a top priority for the NNC. In the last 10 years, we rehoused more than 100,000 objects to ensure their long-term preservation. This work includes researching museum storage trends, consulting with conservation colleagues, building custom storage boxes, and working with companies who create archival storage products.

U.S. Coin Rehousing

To prepare for our United States coin digitization project, Collections Specialist Alisha Ankin and Collections Manager Jen Gloede completed the rehousing of 15,000 U.S. coins. This multiyear project received federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund. Each coin was moved from its small, black cardboard tray into an archival tray of a similar size with appropriate identification information. This created a safer environment for the coins and greater efficiency in their digitization.

Fractional Currency

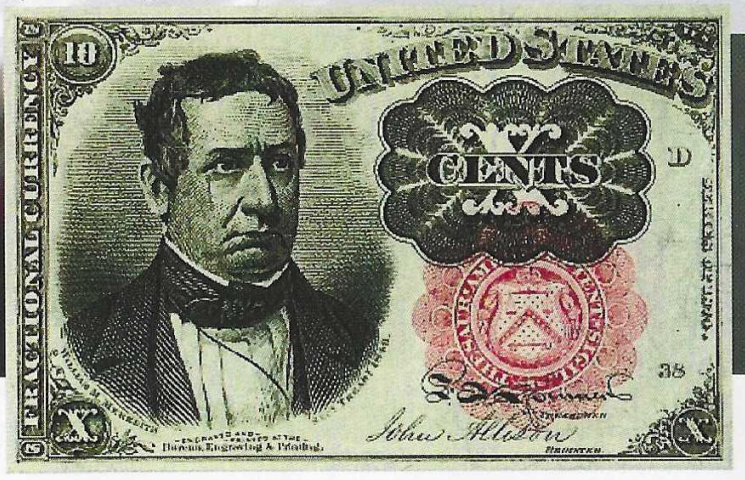
The NNC's fractional currency collection consists of over 1,100 Civil War-era notes, models and encased postage stamps. In the past year, Jen has worked to catalog and rehouse this collection, which was

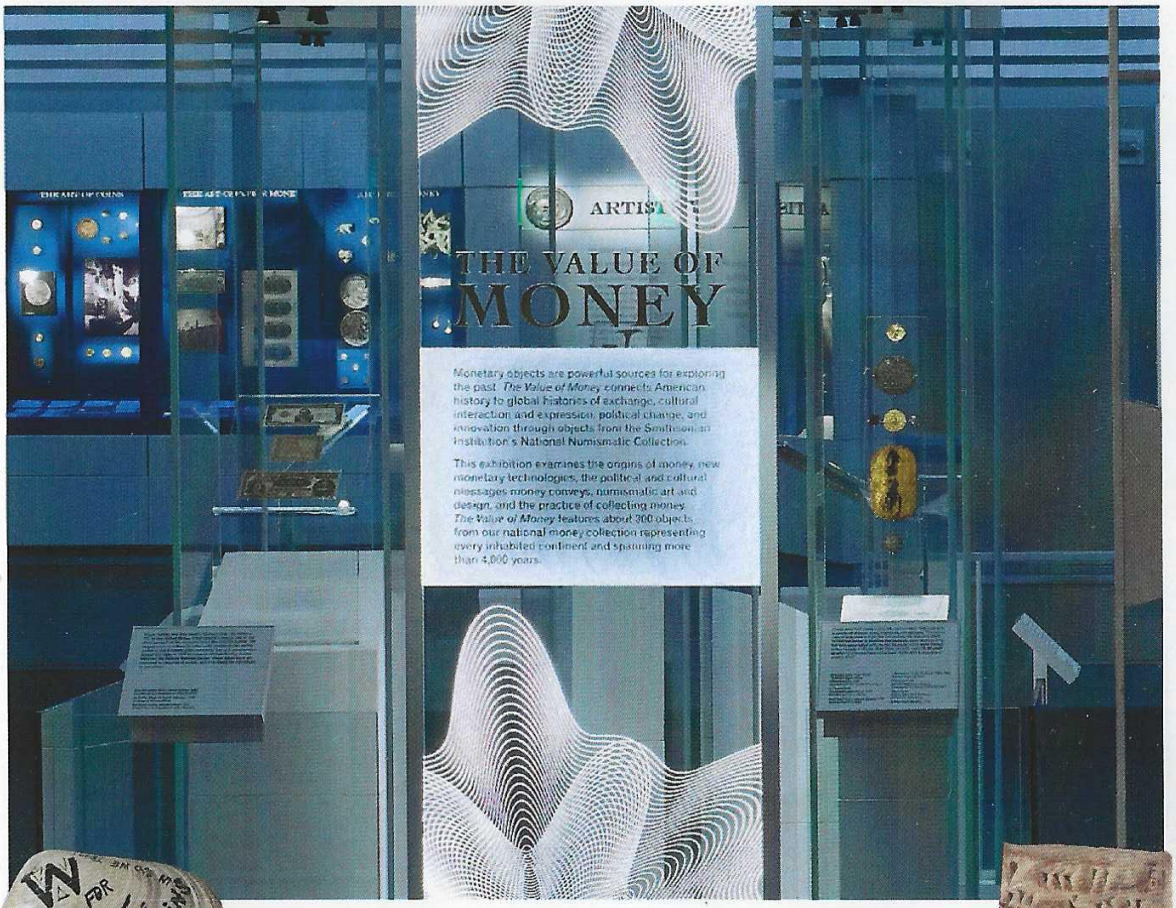
Background: Tray of rehoused United States coins | Right: 10 cent fractional currency note, U.S., 1874–1876

largely undocumented in the Museum's database and, therefore, undiscoverable online. Jen has created more than 900 records to document and track these objects. She describes the condition of the object and rehouses each note in a Mylar sleeve with a label. This cataloging and rehousing work prepares the objects to be digitized in the future.

Unraveling a Collections Mystery

The most significant portion of the fractional currency collection is the Herman K. Crofoot Collection, which contains hundreds of objects, including unique pieces that document the development of fractional currency. The collection was donated by Crofoot's widow in 1971 after years of negotiation. According to the Museum's records, these objects were originally arranged and stored in binders, but, at some point, individual notes were removed without being labeled, and the binders were discarded. Jen has been engaged in some detective work using accession file documents and object lists to piece together which notes came from particular binders and to account for each object. It is one of the most challenging collections management puzzles she has worked to resolve in her nearly 10 years as part of the NNC team.




THE VALUE OF MONEY
Monetary objects are powerful sources for exploring the past. The Value of Money connects American history to global histories of exchange, cultural interaction, and expression, political change, and innovation through objects from the Smithsonian Institution's National Numismatic Collection.
This exhibition examines the origins of money, new monetary technologies, the political and cultural messages money conveys, numismatic art and design, and the practice of collecting money. The Value of Money features about 300 objects from our national money collection representing every inhabited continent and spanning more than 4,000 years.

Better With Age

The Value of Money Gets Refreshed

The Value of Money is looking better than ever as it prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary this summer. In anticipation of that milestone, we renovated the gallery to boost its appearance and include exciting, timely new content and acquisitions.

Updated Entry

Lighting on the gallery's enhanced entry feature and main label (above) creates an eye-catching glow that draws visitors in, setting the tone for viewing our world-class collection. Vertical cases surrounding it hold a wide range of objects, such as cuneiform tablets that served as trade ledgers in ancient Mesopotamia; a clamshell used as money in Pismo Beach, California, during the Great Depression; and a $100,000 bill. Improved lighting throughout the gallery highlights treasures held in each case and the engaging stories they tell.

Above: Inside The Value of Money *exhibition; clam shell alternative currency, Pismo Beach, CA, 1933; cuneiform tablet, 2100 B.C.E.* | *Opposite: Jen Gloede preps new case; 1 shilling, 1667–1674; bridge money, China, fifth–third century B.C.E.*

Added Display Case

A new, large wall case is dedicated to changing displays that will rotate every two to three years to showcase more of our collection, tell new stories, and keep the gallery current and vibrant. The first story featured is "Revolutionary Money." It spotlights a wide range of artifacts that circulated in Revolutionary America, including beaver pelts, wampum, foreign and Colonial coins, and Continental banknotes. This connects with the Museum's efforts to help commemorate the United States' 250th anniversary and draw greater attention to our gallery in 2026, when the Museum expects to double the annual visitation of more than 2 million people coming through our doors.

New Objects

The "Allure of Money" section retained its popular displays of American rarities from the U.S. Mint, including three 1804 silver dollars, and a case of selections from the Lilly collection. Enhancing this section is an updated case featuring artifacts from renowned American collectors Howard F. Bowker and George B. Glover. Together they document American connections to Chinese monetary history and the compelling history of coins in China spanning more than 2,400 years.

Thank You!

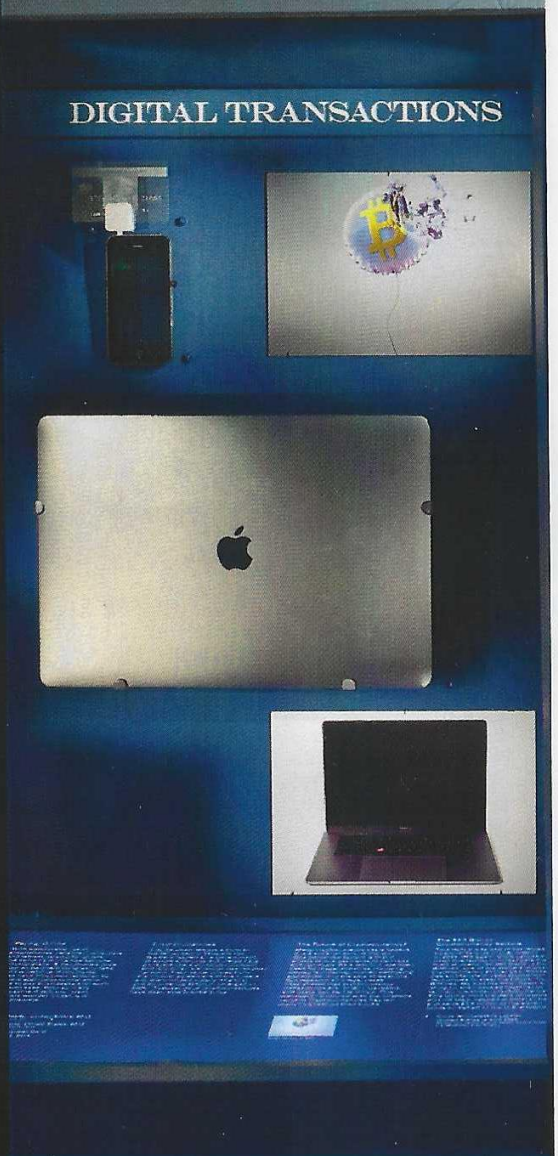
We are grateful to the extraordinary donors who supported gallery work throughout the last decade. On our beautiful new donor recognition panel, visitors see the many Friends of the NNC who make possible *The Value of Money* and the showcasing of our numismatic treasures.

Updates were made possible by **Charles and Hilda Anderson**, the **Howard F. Bowker family**, **Michael Chou**, **Bill and Dianne Calderazzo**, and **Jeff and Mary Lynn Garrett**. Original funding for the exhibition was provided by **Bill Gale**, **Lilly Endowment Inc.**, **Lee and Saundra Minshull**, an **anonymous donor**, and contributions from **many others in the numismatic community**.

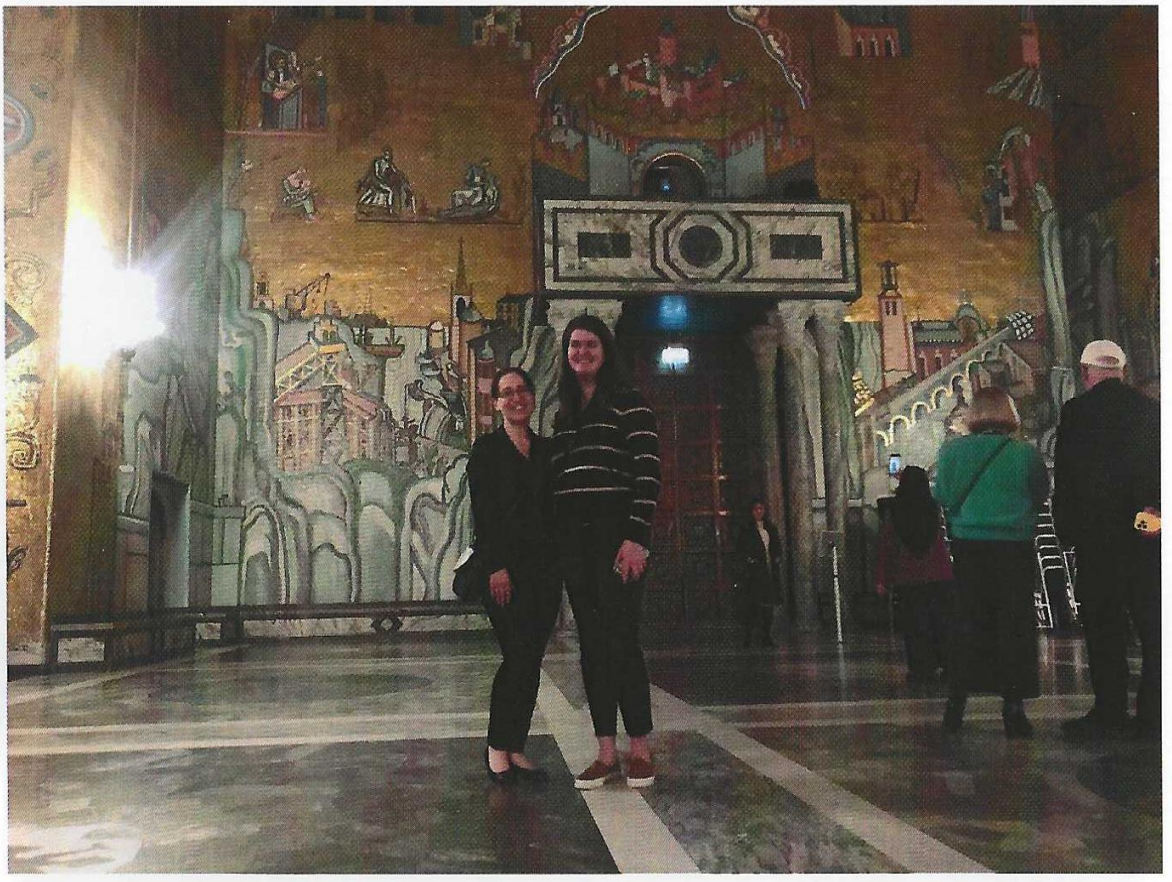
Acquisition of *intrigue*

The "Innovations of Money" section of *The Value of Money* exhibition now features the NNC's newest acquisition: an IRS Criminal Investigation agent's laptop that helped the United States government trace and seize $3.6 billion of stolen cryptocurrency in 2022. This sensational case, which resulted in the largest financial seizure in U.S. history, has garnered a great deal of media attention, including a new Netflix documentary called *Biggest Heist Ever*.

The NNC chose to acquire and display this laptop because it reveals both how our understanding of cryptocurrency has changed since its inception and why this evolution matters. Ellen Feingold, the NNC's curator, wrote an article about the laptop's acquisition for *Smithsonian* magazine, a piece picked up by MSN.com and many other news sites, which helped *The Value of Money* and NNC reach a larger audience than ever before. The laptop and the agent who cracked the case, Chris Janczewski, were also featured on *CBS Saturday Morning* and the Smithsonian's *Sidedoor* podcast in an episode called "Bitcoin Bank Heist."



Above: "Innovations of Money" section of The Value of Money



NNC Visits STOCKHOLM!

Last September, NNC Curator Ellen Feingold and Collections Manager Jen Gloede attended the International Committee for Money and Banking Museums' conference in Stockholm, Sweden. Stockholm's Economy Museum, exploring Swedish money and economics, hosted the three-day event focused on cross-organization collaborations. The conference drew a global audience of numismatists and museum professionals and engaged participants with the Economy Museum's new money gallery and interactive space for students.

Jen gave a presentation on the NNC's recent collaborative digitization projects, focusing on how collections images from those efforts have been shared and used by broad audiences. Her presentation sparked a number of interesting conversations with colleagues also digitizing their collections.

Highlights of the trip include tours of the Vasa Museum, Royal Palace and Stockholm City Hall. The stunning Golden Hall (above) in City Hall boasts 18 million gold mosaic tiles.

Above: Ellen Feingold, Jen Gloede, Stockholm City Hall | Right: 1 riksdaler, Sweden, 1640

THANK YOU

We extend our thanks to Friends of the National Numismatic Collection who have made gifts in the last 12 months.

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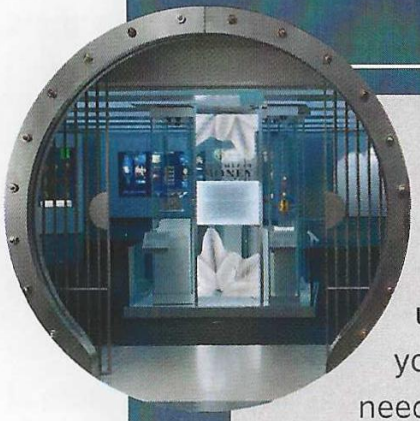
Join Us

June 18



Active Friends of the NNC recently received an invitation for a **June 18** luncheon and tour of the Museum's updated *The Value of Money* gallery. If you did not receive your digital invite or need to renew your membership, **contact Stephanie Johnson at (202) 633-0398 or JohnsonSt@si.edu**.

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